

Agricultural Lands Study
Summary of Comments
July 16, 2004

This summary provides an overview of comments to date related to questions (f) through (i) in SB 6488.

(f) Effect of designation on tax revenue

- Compare similar rural and agriculture designated properties.
- Review cost of services study for Skagit and San Juan counties prepared by American Farmland Trust.
- Check Dept. of Revenue tax deferral programs for agriculture lands.

(g) Contribution of agriculture to the local economy

- What are the benefits to the environment, wildlife and air quality?
- Absentee land ownership affects the contribution to the local economy.

(h) Threats to maintaining the agricultural land base

- Fragmentation of the land base.
- Appraisal at highest and best use.
- Buying land on spec and pressuring for zoning changes.
- Backing into ag policy at the state level through land use.
- Access to markets and centralized buying by large grocers.
- Consolidation of market buyers
- Minimum wage and child labor laws.
- Regulatory review.
- Limits on spraying.
- The good years don't make up for the bad years.

(i) Measures local governments should adopt to better maintain the agricultural land base and sustain and enhance the agricultural industry

- Provide support for farm transition.
- Economic development councils should support ag.
- Maintain extension services and county agriculture advisory boards.

(j) Any other type of information that will help the committees to evaluate the implementation and effect of designation

- Can the State define how much ag land is enough?
- How much food is imported; what are those impacts.
- As ag lands are parcelized, voluntary conservation is more difficult, costs increase, and environmental impacts increase.